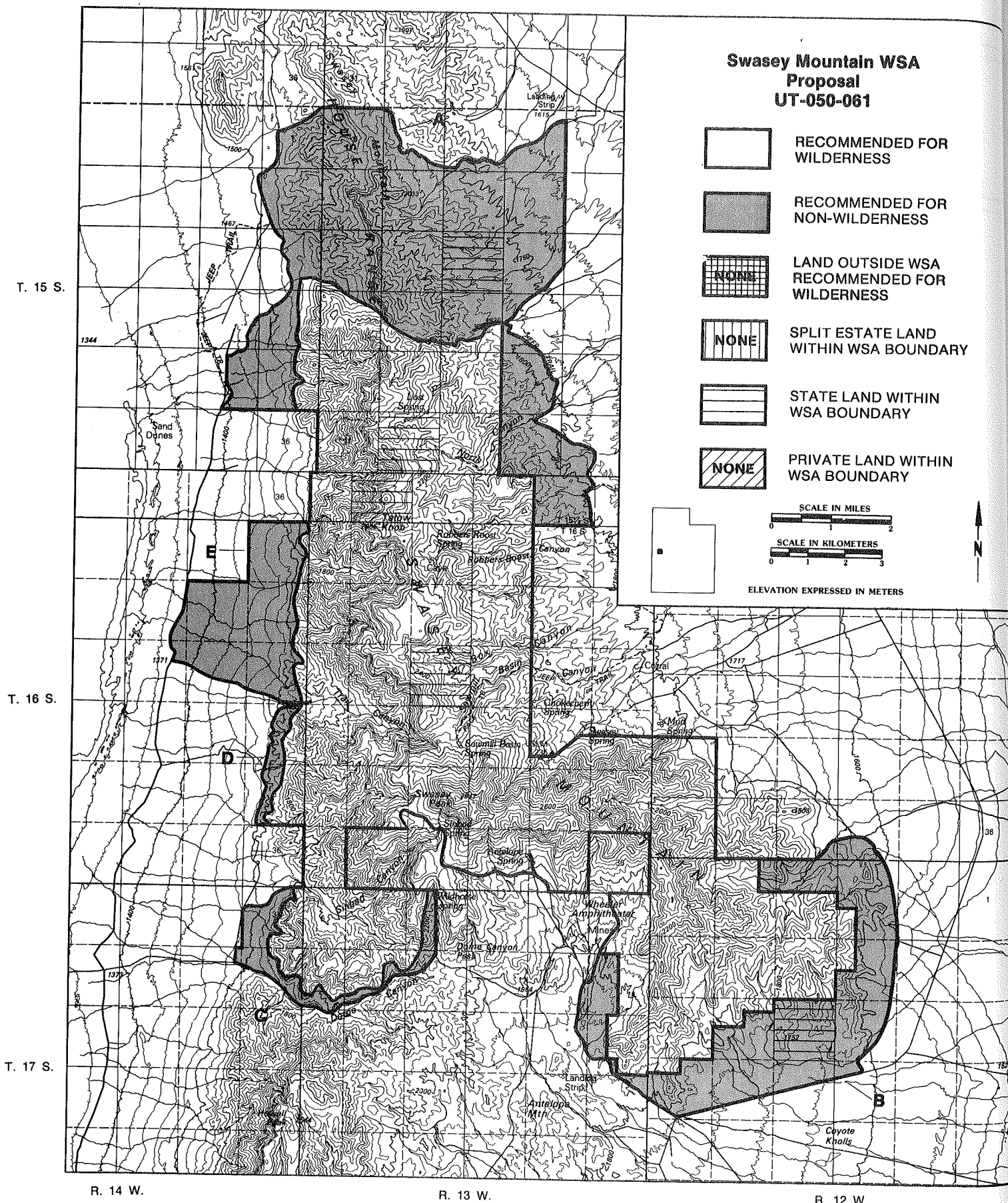


# Swasey Mountain

## WSA



# SWASEY MOUNTAIN WSA



# SWASEY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

## 1. THE STUDY AREA: 49,500 acres

The Swasey Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-050-061) is in the northern House Range, in northwestern Millard County, about 35 miles west of Delta, Utah (population 1,930). The study area is an "L" or boot-shaped unit about 17 miles from north to south and 12 miles from east to west in the southern portion (see Map). It includes 49,500 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 5 sections (3,078 acres) of State land (see Table 1). No private or split-estate lands are within the WSA. The WSA is surrounded mostly by public lands, but 13 State sections are adjacent.

Improved and unimproved roads and section lines that exclude the State lands on the margins and enclose public lands that fulfill the Wilderness Act criteria delimit the WSA. The Howell Peak WSA (UT-050-077) is directly south, separated from the Swasey Mountain WSA by a County maintained road.

The central portion of the WSA is very rugged. Elevations range from around 5,000 feet at the edges of the WSA to Swasey Peak (9,669 feet) and Tatow Knob (8,416 feet). Pinyon-juniper woodland is the dominant vegetation type, and stands of Douglas fir, white fir, limber pine, ponderosa pine, bristlecone pine, and aspen grow at higher elevations.

TABLE 1  
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA\*

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	49,500
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	3,078
Total	52,578
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	34,376
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	34,376
In-holdings (State, private)	1,798
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	15,124
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	15,124
In-holdings (State, Private)	1,280

Source: BLM File Data

\* The Appendix is a detailed table of in-holdings included within the portion of the WSA recommended for designation.

## SWASEY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Three alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a partial wilderness alternative, where 34,376 acres would be designated as wilderness and the remaining 15,124 acres would be released for other uses, which is the recommendation in this report; a no wilderness (no action) alternative; and an all wilderness alternative.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

34,376 acres

(recommended for wilderness)

15,124 acres

(recommended for nonwilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to designate 34,376 acres as wilderness, and to release the remaining 15,124 acres for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. This recommendation for wilderness will further apply to any additional in-holding acreage acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. The Appendix lists all in-holdings in the recommended portion and provides information on acquisition of in-holdings.

The recommended partial wilderness alternative includes the highest and most mountainous portion of the WSA which contains the most wilderness values. All of the area recommended for wilderness designation is natural. About 94 percent of the recommended portion has outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and 30 percent has scenery of outstanding quality. Little or no conflict with other uses exists.

The portion of the WSA that is not recommended for wilderness designation (Areas A, B, C, D, and E on Map) is mostly benchlands without high quality

scenic values and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Wilderness designation of this portion of the WSA would impose constraints on livestock management and vehicular recreation. Potential for mineral development and off-highway vehicular (OHV) recreation, although generally considered to be low in this WSA, are greater outside the area recommended for wilderness designation. BLM considers these resource values and potential uses to be more significant than the relatively minimal wilderness values. Area A has known potential for extraction of disseminated gold and possibly other locatable minerals. This area has the majority of the present mining claims. About 164 of the 177 claims in the WSA are in two claim blocks in the portion that would not be designated wilderness. These deposits have been explored by five companies. Intensive mapping and sampling have shown favorable results.

### 3. CRITERIA USED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

#### Wilderness Characteristics

##### A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. A wide variety of vegetation and topographic features provide a scenic treat to visitors in the area. At over 9,600 feet, Swasey Mountain is the highest peak in the House Range and a prominent West Desert landmark. Swasey Peak, Tatow Knob, and the sheer limestone cliffs along the west side are the most striking features. The east slopes are characterized by pinyon and juniper giving way to Douglas fir, white fir, and bristlecone pine on the upper portions. Essentially all of the WSA meets the naturalness criteria of the Wilderness Act. Approximately 11 miles of ways at lower elevations on the eastern side of the WSA are substantially unnoticeable. In 1983, mineral exploration activities, including two drill holes and 3,000 feet of road, affected a total area of about 1 acre. All disturbance was rehabilitated

## SWASEY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

in 1984. In 1987, a BLM communication site that had been installed on an 8 foot by 10 foot pad was removed and the site was restored to a substantially unnoticeable condition.

### B. Solitude

About 32,175 acres (94 percent of the area proposed for wilderness designation) meet the Wilderness Act standards for solitude, or seclusion from other people.

The WSA is large enough for visitors to be unaware of others in the vicinity. Rugged terrain contributes to solitude in the central portion of the WSA, which is the portion recommended for wilderness. The highest points, Swasey Peak and Tatow Knob, provide outstanding views of Tule Valley, the Deep Creek Mountains, and Wheeler Peak in Great Basin National Park (Nevada), further contributing to the feeling of solitude. Vegetation also contributes to seclusion by screening visitors from each other; the most dense vegetation is also in the higher parts of the WSA.

The Swasey Mountain WSA is in the South Range of the U.S. Air Force (USAF) Utah Test and Training Range (UTTR), one of the country's busiest military air spaces. From 100 to 150 daily flights, 6 days a week, are made in the UTTR. Some flights are as low as 100 feet above ground level. The WSA is within the area of heaviest use, and aircraft occasionally fly directly over the WSA. Although overflights in the vicinity of Swasey Mountain are usually subsonic, they can be an annoyance that detracts from but does not eliminate overall opportunities for solitude.

About 17,325 acres in the WSA, including the lower benchlands not recommended for wilderness designation, do not meet the standards for solitude. The terrain and sparse vegetation do not offer seclusion.

### C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Wilderness Act standards for primitive and unconfined recreational opportunities are substantially met in the central part of the WSA on 32,175 acres

(94 percent of the portion recommended for wilderness designation).

Opportunities for rockhounding, horse-back riding, backpacking, and scenic viewing are considered to be above average in the central part of the WSA.

Approximately 17,325 acres in the benchlands on the margin of the WSA do not meet the standards for primitive and unconfined recreation due to relatively flat slopes and sparse vegetation.

### D. Special Features

Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, both endangered species, and golden eagles, a BLM sensitive species, inhabit the WSA. Golden eagles nest in the WSA, and 49,000 acres are crucial yearlong golden eagle habitat.

Six candidate threatened or endangered species that could inhabit the WSA include the ferruginous hawk, Swainson's hawk, long-billed curlew, western snowy plover, white-faced ibis, and Swasey Spring pocket gopher. The birds also frequent areas throughout the Great Basin and western United States.

On the higher slopes are 1,100 acres of bristlecone pine, one of the oldest living species of trees. Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Vegetation and Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

A herd of 77 wild horses roams the WSA. Although wild horses are not unique in the western United States, they are of considerable interest to most observers. Management plans are to maintain the herd at between 60 and 100 head.

The area around the WSA is considered to be outstanding in Utah and nationally for Cambrian trilobites. The best specimens found so far are on a section of State land adjacent to the WSA, but there are at least 150 acres of fossil beds within the WSA and specimens of high quality may be present. At least four caves also exist in limestone within the WSA.



# SWASEY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

## Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

### A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a combination of potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystems not presently represented in the NWPS, but it would add a PNV ecosystem (saltbush-greasewood) not now represented in the NWPS in Utah.

PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area.

The WSA is in the Intermountain Sagebrush Province/Ecoregion. The PNV types

in the WSA are juniper-pinyon woodland (14,850 acres) and saltbush-greasewood (34,650 acres). Juniper-pinyon woodland is not widely represented in the NWPS but is identified in several BLM WSAs both in and outside of Utah. The saltbush-greasewood ecosystem is also well represented in WSAs, but not in the NWPS. This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

### B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah standard metropolitan statistical areas. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

TABLE 2  
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

BAILEY-KUCHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
NATIONWIDE (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	6	43,656	75	2,139,057
Saltbush-Greasewood	3	45,553	37	996,957
UTAH (INTERMOUNTAIN SAGEBRUSH PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	2	14,955	13	244,583
Saltbush-Greasewood	0	0	7	122,195

Source: BLM File Data.

TABLE 3  
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	10	1,079,807	78	2,210,175
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	708,638	90	2,737,368

Source: BLM File Data.

## SWASEY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

### C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Swasey Mountain WSA would not contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. It would contribute, however, to balancing the NWPS in the Great Basin.

As of January 1987, the NWPS included 16 areas comprising 866,915 acres in Utah and Nevada, the adjacent state nearest the WSA. The 25,500-acre Deseret Peak Wilderness is within 100 miles northeast of the WSA and the 28,000-acre Mt. Nebo Wilderness is to the east. Both are in National Forests. No wilderness areas have been designated to the north, west, or south in the vicinity of the WSA, however. Only three wilderness areas, totaling 272,994 acres, are in the Great Basin. Only three areas in the NWPS have the same combination of PNV types (see "Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems . . ."). All three are in California.

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.)

The portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness designation can be managed as wilderness to preserve values now present in the area. Resource and land conflicts are not now a problem in the WSA and are not anticipated to be in the future. The low probability of mineral resources in the recommended portion of the WSA indicate that potential for exploration would be low and therefore would not require special management attention. Current recreational use of about 500 annual visitor days is almost evenly split between vehicular and nonvehicular use. Wilderness designation would not affect this pattern, as most of the nonvehicular use is in the rugged central portion and vehicular use could continue in the portion not recommended for designation. Livestock grazing could continue as at present, requiring little or no change in management.

The USAF has stated that military flights will continue in the vicinity of the WSA, whether it is designated or not. Overflights would detract from

solitude, and BLM management could not mitigate such disturbance. This conflict could be resolved only at the Congressional level.

There are 18,722 acres of post-FLPMA oil and gas leases in the area recommended as wilderness. These leases are subject to the nonimpairment stipulations and could be managed to preserve wilderness values. There are also 13 mining claims in the area recommended for wilderness, but the potential for valid discoveries and eventual production are lower than in the portion of the WSA not recommended for wilderness. There are three sections of State land (1,798 acres) in the area recommended for wilderness. Mineral developments on these lands and provision of access to them could reduce the quality of opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, mainly in the northern part of the recommended area. However, the mineral potential and, therefore, the probability of development is lower than in the area not recommended for wilderness designation.

The area not recommended for wilderness designation could also be managed as wilderness but any mineral-related activity that might take place in the WSA along with associated vehicular use, would be in that area.

There are 164 mining claims in the portion of the WSA not recommended for wilderness. The mineral potential and, therefore, the probability of valid mineral discoveries is higher in this portion of the WSA than in the portion recommended for wilderness.

### Energy and Mineral Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) prepared a mineral assessment report for the Swasey Mountain WSA (USGS Bulletin 1749-A, David A. Lindsey, et al., 1989). The area studied comprises 34,376 acres, and includes the portion of the WSA that is recommended for wilderness designation. The report indicates that no mineral production has been recorded for the WSA. Inferred subeconomic resources include high-purity limestone, quartzite, and sand and gravel. Fossils, especially trilobites, of interest to collectors are present in the area. The

## SWASEY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

northern part of the study area has moderate potential for undiscovered resources of lead, zinc, copper, molybdenum, silver and gold, including disseminated gold deposits. The southwestern part of the study area also has moderate potential for resources of these metals. Potential for undiscovered deposits of high-purity limestone and dolomite and for oil and gas is moderate for the study area. The potential for undiscovered resources of geothermal energy is low. There is no potential for undiscovered resources of coal.

### Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives including designation of the entire area as wilderness.

### Local Social and Economic Considerations

The only known potential effects on local economic conditions would result from restrictions on mining of locatable minerals such as disseminated gold. Probable loss of employment opportunities with the all wilderness alternative would be less than 1 percent of the Millard County employment. No impacts on social conditions have been identified.

### Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 57 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 63 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs.

In general, 42 commenters supported the wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 15 commenters were opposed. Six commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS, but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on special features present in the WSA and the protection offered by wilderness designation. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from urban areas in Utah. Of particular concern was the need to protect special features and primitive recreational opportunities.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would preclude mineral exploration and development. The majority of these commenters were from rural Utah, and were local to the area.

Three Federal agencies; the USAF, USBM, and National Park Service (NPS), commented on the Draft EIS. The Federal agencies did not take a position regarding designation or nondesignation of the WSA. The USAF noted that low altitude flights will continue over the WSA with or without wilderness designation and that they will not negotiate nor sign any agreement to avoid the proposed wilderness area. This conflict can be resolved only on the Congressional level.

The USBM noted that BLM's Final EIS should include the findings of the USGS and USBM mineral investigations and those findings would be available in November 1988. These findings have been incorporated into the Final EIS and study report. The USBM also commented that BLM had understated the petroleum potential of the WSA.

The NPS recommended that BLM identify the WSA as a proposed National Natural Landmark.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.



## SWASEY MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

There are five State sections (3,078 acres) in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation but did not take a definite position regarding wilderness designation of the WSA. The State commented that the Swasey Mountain WSA has had moderate to high wilderness values and conflicts. Wilderness would conflict with disseminated gold and porphory molybdenum and that a boundary adjustment to delete the north quarter of the WSA would help to reduce livestock conflicts. Specific State comments on the Draft EIS dealt with errors in the mapping of State lands, inadequacies of the geology discussion, mineral relationships, and underestimation of the mule deer population by BLM.

The Millard County Master Plan does not specifically address wilderness. The Millard County Commission favors protection of natural and esthetic resources on public lands as well as multiple use and believes that these objectives can be met without wilderness designation. The Commission has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation for BLM lands in Utah.

# SWASEY MOUNTAIN WSA

Table 4  
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Alternatives		
	Recommendation Partial Wilderness (34,376 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (49,500 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would be preserved overall in the designated area which is about 69 percent of the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 50 acres and indirectly reduced in quality on up to 12,375 acres due to mining as with the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative. Special features would be preserved. Continued vehicular use of 3 miles of ways in the nondesignated area would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation and loss would occur as intrusions increase. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 50 acres and indirectly reduced in quality on up to 12,375 acres due to development of locatable minerals. Special features would not be significantly affected. Continued vehicular use of 11 miles of ways would detract from opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.	Wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities of solitude and primitive recreation would be preserved overall. In spite of wilderness designation, these values would be directly lost on 16 acres of the WSA, and their quality indirectly reduced on up to 7,425 acres due to mining in the foreseeable future. Special features would be preserved.
Impacts on Mineral and Energy Exploration and Production	This alternative would not adversely affect mineral and energy exploration and development in the WSA because the portion of the WSA with known locatable minerals would not be designated as wilderness.	Mineral and energy exploration and development would not be adversely affected because the area would remain open to leasing and mining claim as at present.	Exploration and development opportunities for locatable minerals would be limited to claims valid at the time of designation. Opportunities for production of significant locatable minerals would be foregone. Loss of leasable and salable mineral production would not be significant because of their low probability of development.

# SWASEY MOUNTAIN WSA

Table 4 (Continued)  
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topics	Alternatives		
	Recommendation Partial Wilderness (34,376 Acres)	No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (49,500 Acres)
Impacts on Wildlife Habitat and Populations	Effects would be the same as for the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative because the projected developments would be in the nondesignated area.	Less than 1 percent (50 acres) of the wildlife habitat would be directly affected. Populations would not be significantly reduced.	Direct disturbance of wildlife habitat would be reduced from 50 to 16 acres. Therefore, wildlife habitat and populations would benefit from wilderness designation.
Impacts on Recreational Use	Primitive recreation opportunities would be preserved in the designated area. Vehicular use would continue on 3 miles of ways in the nondesignated area, but most of the WSA would not be available for vehicular access. The loss of ORV opportunities would not be significant on a regional basis. Overall, recreation use would initially decline, and would be less than what would occur with the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative.	Vehicular use would continue on 11 miles of ways at current levels. Initially, both vehicular and primitive recreational use would increase. Eventually, the quality and extent of primitive use may decline as vehicular use increases.	The WSA, including 11 miles of ways, would be closed to vehicular use. Opportunities for primitive recreational use would be preserved while opportunities for motorized recreation would be eliminated. The loss of ORV opportunities would not be significant on a regional basis. Overall, recreation use would initially decline and would be less than what would occur with the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative.
Impacts on Economic Conditions	Effects would be the same as for the All Wilderness Alternative.	Local economic conditions would not be significantly affected. Local employment would be increased less than 1 percent by mineral development.	Employment losses would be less than 1 percent of the Millard County employment. Economic conditions would not be affected.

# SWASEY MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Appendix  
Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Non-Federal Holdings Within Areas Recommended for Designation a

Legal Description (Prior to any Subdivision)	Total Acreage	Number of Owners (If Parcel has been subdivided)	Type of Ownership by Estate (Federal, State, Private, Other) (Surface Estate) (Subsurface Estate)	Presently Proposed for Acquisition (Yes, No)	Preferred Method of Acquisition (Purchase, Exchange, Other)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Land Costs)	Estimated Cost of Acquisition (Processing Costs)
T. 15 S., R. 13 W., Sec. 32	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 15.5 S., R. 13 W., Sec. 32	517.70		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000
T. 16 S., R. 13 W., Sec. 15	640.00		State	No	Exchange		\$2,000

a The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a Federal appraised value of the land or mineral estate, but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring non-Federal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.